

# Opinions of University Music Teachers on the Musical Competencies Necessary for Primary Education Teachers

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Received: December 5, 2016

Accepted: December 30, 2016

Online Published: January 4, 2017

doi:10.5430/ijhe.v6n1p197

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n1p197>

## Abstract

This paper describes the research conducted in the Republic of Croatia during the 2012/13 academic year. We have gathered opinions from experts, i.e. teaching methods teachers from seven faculties of teacher education, regarding the music teaching competencies necessary for primary education teachers teaching music in the first several grades of elementary school. We used the *Delphi method* in our research, i.e. in our sample survey among teaching methods teachers. The teachers also evaluated the competencies of their students and some elements of teacher education studies course syllabi and programmes. The sample survey among the teachers was implemented via email. The goal of the research was to determine if the programmes of the music courses at the teacher education studies are appropriate for the development of the competencies necessary for students of music education. Teaching methods teachers emphasized the need for more practical training, primarily regarding playing instruments and singing, and they pointed out that the course Teaching Methods in Music is the most important course for the training of future music teachers. Aside from that, they believe that more classes should be devoted to music courses, i.e. they propose to reorganise the contents of the courses by increasing the amount of practical classes and reducing the amount of theory classes. They also believe that it is necessary to introduce testing of musical ability at entrance exams for admission into the teacher education studies.

**Keywords:** Teacher education studies, Competencies of music education students, Primary education

## 1. Introduction

Research has shown that in many countries primary education teachers acquire relatively low levels of musical education during their studies and that their musical competencies are quite low. Several studies have been conducted in Great Britain (Stunell, 2010; Hallam et al., 2009; Holden & Button, 2006; Hargreaves et al., 2003; Barisieri, 2000; Alexander, 1994; Kempton, 1992) and in the USA (Hash, 2010; Byo, 2000; Jeanneret, 1997) on the topic of competencies of primary education music teachers for teaching music. An international research was also conducted (Russel-Bowie, 1993), which included primary education teachers from Australia, Namibia, the USA, Ireland, and South Africa. So Hallam et al. (2009) determined that many primary education teachers believe that they did not acquire the competencies necessary for teaching music. Hargreaves et al. (2003, according to Heyning, 2010), for example, noticed that teaching music caused the greatest amount of stress to teachers in Great Britain, due to their lack of confidence in their competencies for teaching music. According to Stunell (2010), it is very important for primary education teachers to see themselves as competent in order to successfully teach music. Kempton (1992) reached the conclusion that many primary education teachers are anxious about teaching music. Barisieri (2000, according to Heyning, 2010) noticed that many specialist music teachers often prefer teaching students in lower grades of elementary school to supporting primary education teachers. Holden and Button (2006) examined 141 primary education teachers in Great Britain and noticed that among ten different courses, music was at the bottom regarding the teachers' confidence in their competencies, and that primary education teachers believe that music should be taught by specialist music teachers. Alexander (1994, according to Heyning, 2010) determined that primary education teachers believe that they are not competent enough to recognise musical ability in their students. Research in the USA has shown very similar results to that in Great Britain. Hash (2010) conducted a study among 116 primary education teachers. The results of the study have shown that most of the participants in the study do not feel confident when teaching music; they believe that music should be taught by a professional music teachers and that primary education teachers are not competent for teaching music. The participants in the study also saw music as less important than other courses. Byo (2000) also determined that primary education teachers believe that they are

not competent to successfully implement the teaching syllabus determined by the national music programme. Jeanneret (1997) noticed that teachers with negative experience in music are less confident about their competence for teaching music. Russel-Bowie (1993, according to Russel-Bowie, 2009) conducted a study among 1000 primary education teachers from Australia, Namibia, the United States of America, Ireland, and South Africa, and listed five problems that they encountered in teaching music. Those were: insufficient knowledge about the course programme, insufficient time allocated for teaching music to each class, lack of affinity toward music, insufficient time to prepare for music courses, and the lack of appropriate resources. In Croatia, also, research has shown that primary education teachers are not enough competent to teach music (Birtić, 2012; Đeldić & Rojko, 2012; Radičević, 2010).

Research into music courses at teacher education studies in the USA (Groff, 1962), Australia (deVries, 2011; Hocking; 2009; Kane, 2005), Canada (Hanley, 1993), England (Altun, 2005), and Turkey (Altun, 2005) reached very similar results. Groff (1962, according to Buckner, 2008) examined the opinions of primary education students in the USA regarding their competence for teaching music. It is surprising that as much as 38 percent of the students, after they attended and passed their music courses, stated that they will not be successful as music teachers. DeVries (2011) points out that the amount of time dedicated to teaching music at teacher education studies affects whether the primary education teachers will teach music, or they will allow a specialist music teacher to teach those courses. Hocking (2009) determined that primary education teachers require more practical musical activities as part of their music courses. Kane (2005) holds a similar opinion, stating that music course programmes must be based on practical knowledge of music and skills that must be acquired through teaching methods for music, which will later be applied by the teachers in their classes. Hanley (1993) states that primary education students must develop musical skills, after which they should be trained to integrate music theory and practice, and finally receive training on how to learn independently, on their own. Based on his research, Altun (2005) proposes that faculties of teacher education should invest more effort in musical training of their students, because most of them never learn how to properly teach music.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Description of the Research and the Experts Included in the Research

We gathered opinions from experts, i.e. from university music teachers that teach courses in teaching methods on seven faculties of teacher education in the Republic of Croatia (Osijek, Zagreb, Petrinja, Čakovec, Slavonski Brod, Pula, Rijeka, Gospić, and Zadar), regarding music teaching competencies necessary for primary education music teachers who must also teach other mandatory courses in the first several grades of elementary school. The teachers also evaluated the training of their students and some elements of course syllabi and programmes of teacher education studies. Opinions of teachers are important for improvement of existing program of teacher studies. The goal of the research was to determine if the programmes of music courses at the teacher education studies contribute to the development of the appropriate competencies for music education students. Ten teaching methods teachers participated in the first stage (*Sample Study Questionnaire 1*) and eight teaching methods teachers participated in the second stage (*Sample Study Questionnaire 2*). The sample study among the teachers was done via email during the 2012/13 academic year. The *Delphi method* was applied in the research, i.e. in the sample study of the teaching methods teachers.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Analysis of the Sample Study Questionnaire 1

*Sample Study Questionnaire 1* consists of two parts. The first part examines the *positions of teaching methods teachers regarding the necessary music competencies of primary education teachers*, and the second part handles the *evaluation of the level of student competency for teaching music*.

The first question in the first part of the questionnaire listed twenty statements to which the teaching methods teachers (N=10) had to reply with *yes* or *no*. The statements were about the knowledge and skills necessary for primary education teachers in order to successfully teach music (Table 1).

Table 1. Knowledge and skills necessary for primary education teachers in order to successfully teach music

Statements	Yes	No
Ability to sing by notes (true music literacy)	8	2
Knowledge of notes for the purpose of playing instruments (basic music literacy)	10	0
Ability to sing properly (appropriate pitch, breathing...)	10	0
Knowledge of lyrics and the ability to sing a certain number of songs	10	0
Ability to independently learn (to sing) a new song	10	0
Ability to play an instrument (piano, synthesizer...)	10	0
Ability to play a certain number of songs	10	0
Ability to independently learn to play a new song	10	0
Knowledge of song harmonisation	7	3
Knowledge of song transposition	8	2
Knowledge of lyrics and the ability to perform a certain number of nursery rhymes	10	0
Basic knowledge of music history	10	0
Ability to dance and create choreography	8	2
Knowledge of a certain number of compositions	9	1
Ability to critically and aesthetically listen to and evaluate music	8	2
Ability to recognise the components of music during listening	9	1
Improvisation	2	8
Knowledge of/ability to perform/create musical games	9	1
Knowledge of the musical folklore of Croatia	9	1
Knowledge of the teaching methods for teaching music and training in the appropriate skills	10	0

The opinions of the ten teaching methods teachers from faculties of teacher education regarding the musical knowledge and skills necessary for primary education teachers are almost completely identical, even regarding knowledge and skills unlikely to be acquired during the teacher education studies, like, for example, *song harmonisation* and/or *transposition*. Aside from those two requests and the request to *sing by notes*, all the other statements about what a primary education teacher should know and have the ability to do are mostly justified. The other question is how this knowledge and skills are realised in practice. The response to the question whether the teacher should know/be able to *improvise* is realistic and expected. Most of the teaching methods teachers believe that it is not necessary, but it is highly likely they do not believe that because they consider improvisation to be unnecessary, but because they believe that it is impossible to train primary education teachers to improvise. Aside from the fact that their opinions on the necessary musical knowledge and skills for primary education teachers correspond, the teaching methods teachers also agree that the listed statements include all the essential musical knowledge and skills. This is confirmed by the second question, in which they were asked to suggest knowledge and skills that were not mentioned in the previous question, which they believe are necessary for primary education teachers to be able to successfully teach music. None of the teachers added new statements.

For the third question – *are there enough music classes as part of music courses at the teacher education studies* – the following answers were offered: a) *there are enough classes*, b) *the number of classes should be increased*, c) *the number of classes should be significantly increased* (Table 2).

Table 2. Sufficiency of classes as part of musical courses

Are there enough music classes as part of music courses at the teacher education studies?	Total N= 10
a) There are enough classes	4
b) The amount should be increased	6
c) The amount should be significantly increased	0

The fact that none of the teaching methods teachers chose the third statement – the amount of classes should be significantly increased – confirms that they are mostly satisfied with the number of classes. Four of them are completely satisfied with the number of classes, and six of them would increase the amount somewhat.

All ten of the teachers answered yes to the question – *is it necessary to test musical ability at the entrance exams for teacher education studies* (Table 3).

Table 3. The necessity for introducing testing of musical ability

<b>Is it necessary to test musical ability at the entrance exams for teacher education studies?</b>	Total N= 10
Yes	10
No	0

The first question in the second part of the *Sample Study Questionnaire 1* was aimed at testing the opinion of teaching methods teachers regarding the level of preparedness of the fourth year students for teaching music. The teachers evaluated the students' level of preparedness on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest mark) (Table 4).

Table 4. Preparedness of students for teaching music

<b>Preparedness of students for teaching music</b>	Total N = 10
1	0
2	0
3	2
4	8
5	0
Average mark	3.8

Eight of the teachers evaluated the preparedness of students for teaching music with a very good mark (4) and two of the teachers evaluated it with a good mark (3), so their average mark is 3.8, i.e. very good. This means that the teaching methods teachers believe that the students are very well prepared for teaching music.

In the second question, the teaching methods teachers were asked to evaluate the preparedness of students to teach specific topics within music courses and to *play the piano/synthesizer/guitar/accordion and percussion instruments* themselves. Table 5 shows those evaluations.

Table 5. Preparedness of students to play the piano/synthesizer/guitar/accordion/percussion instruments, to sing, to perform musical games/elements of musical creativity, to listen to music, according to the evaluations of teaching methods teachers

<b>Preparedness of students for:</b>	Average mark
Playing the piano/synthesizer/guitar/accordion	3.5
Playing percussion instruments	3.7
Singing	4.0
Musical games/elements of musical creativity	4.1
Listening to music	4.1

The teachers evaluated the preparedness of their students for all course topics and activities with a very good mark. *Listening to music* and *musical games/elements of musical creativity* were evaluated with the mark 4.1, *singing* with 4.0, and *playing percussion instruments* with 3.7. The lowest mark was given to the topic preparedness to *play a backing instrument*, but that mark is still very good (3.5). We must point out here that these evaluations are not realistic and that students are not nearly as well prepared for teaching music as it may appear from the answers provided by their teaching methods teachers. This can be seen clearly in every one of their teaching methods exercises, as well as from their skill at playing instruments, i.e. in situations when they have to sing and play an instrument at the same time. It appears that the teaching methods teachers were actually evaluating themselves with

these responses. If they were stricter with their evaluations of their students, they would diminish the value of their work with the students.

With the third question we wanted to find out the opinion of the teaching methods teachers on the amount of time that the students will be required to *play the piano/synthesizer/guitar/accordion* as teachers (Table 6). The teachers were asked to choose one of the provided answers: *a) they will not play instruments at all; b) they will only play instruments sometimes and only simple songs and those songs they are familiar with; c) they will play instruments as much as it is required.*

Table 6. The amount of time students will spend playing instruments as teachers

<b>How much time will the future teachers spend playing instruments</b>	Total N=10
a) they will not play instruments at all	0
b) they will only play instruments sometimes and only simple songs and those songs they are familiar with	5
c) they will play instruments as much as it is required	5

The opinions of teachers were divided between answers that the students will *only play instruments sometimes and only simple songs and those songs they are familiar with* and that the students will *play instruments as much as it is required*, therefore, they will play instruments, i.e. they will not have any problems playing instruments. This result actually means that the teaching methods teachers believe that the students are well prepared for playing instruments. It appears that our question led the teachers to choose answers that are most advantageous for them. Maybe the question should have been phrased differently to provide the teaching methods teachers the opportunity to offer more criticism in their answers. The assumption that music teachers who teach courses in teaching methods at faculties of teacher education are unaware of the real situation in the teaching practice is unlikely, i.e. that the primary education teachers who play instruments in class are actually exceptions to the rule.

The teaching methods teachers answered the fourth and the fifth question – *how much time will the future teachers spend teaching about musical games* (estimate from one to five) and *will they have music listening sessions as part of their classes* (estimate from one to five) – as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. How much time will the students spend teaching about musical games and listening to music

<b>How much time will the future teachers spend teaching about musical games</b>	Total N= 10
1	0
2	0
3	2
4	2
5	6
Average mark	4.4

  

<b>Will the students have music listening sessions as part of their classes</b>	Total N= 10
1	0
2	0
3	2
4	3
5	5
Average mark	4.3

The teaching methods teachers answered both questions in almost the same manner, as is evident from the table, and the answers were very optimistic. The average marks are above four for both cases. Those estimates are even more optimistic if we consider the fact that none of the teaching methods teachers chose marks one and two. The teachers

who were of the opinion that their students will *teach musical games* and have *music listening sessions* very frequently obviously believe that their students are very well prepared for those aspects of teaching.

In the sixth question the teaching methods teachers were asked to choose one of the offered topics within music courses, for which they believe their students are most competent (Table 8).

Table 8. Course topic for which the students are most competent

<b>Course topic for which the students are most competent</b>	Total N = 8
a) singing	2
b) playing instruments	2
c) listening to music	2
d) musical games/elements of musical creativity	2

Two of the teaching methods teachers decided to choose all four of the offered answers and we did not count their choices in the total number of people who participated in the sample study. The opinions of the other teachers, regarding the course topic for which the students are most competent, are distributed evenly. Namely, two of the teachers chose each of the four offered answers. Therefore, there is no common opinion regarding the course topic for which the students are most competent.

In the following question – *in your opinion, which course topic do your students prefer* – the teaching methods teachers were also asked to choose one of the topics of the music courses (*singing, playing instruments, listening to music, musical games/elements of musical creativity*) (Table 9).

Table 9. Course topics preferred by the students

<b>Which course topics do the students prefer</b>	Total N = 8
a) singing	2
b) playing instruments	0
c) listening to music	2
d) musical games/elements of musical creativity	4

One of the teaching methods teachers chose two of the offered answers (*singing* and *playing instruments*) and one teacher chose all four of the offered answers, so we did not count their choices in the total number of people who participated in the sample study. The results still show that the teaching methods teachers believe that the students mostly prefer *musical games/elements of musical creativity*. This is actually a very significant evaluation and this is the only question where the teaching methods teachers, probably inadvertently, expressed what they actually thought about the preparedness of their students. *Musical games/elements of musical creativity* is the least demanding topic, for which the students can be trained more easily than for any other.

In the eighth question the teaching methods teachers were asked to choose a course in music which they believe significantly contributed to the competency of their students for teaching music, but most of them chose two or more, i.e. they did not point out any individual courses. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Course that significantly contributed to the students' competency

<b>Teaching methods teacher</b>	<b>Course that significantly contributed to the students' competency</b>
1.	<i>Music, Teaching Methods in Music</i>
2.	<i>Music, Music Exercises, Teaching Methods in Music</i>
3.	<i>Teaching Methods in Music 1 and 2, Music Exercises</i>
4.	<i>Playing Instruments, Teaching Methods in Music</i>
5.	<i>Music Exercises (playing instruments), Music Writing, Teaching Methods in Music</i>
6.	<i>Music Exercises and Music with Teaching Methods (practical work that the students do in schools is particularly important)</i>
7.	<i>All of the courses have contributed to the music teaching competency of the students to a certain extent, I would especially like to point out the course Teaching Methods in Music</i>
8.	<i>It is impossible to choose and single out just one course because they are constantly interconnected</i>
9.	<i>It is difficult for me to choose a course because I believe that all of them are necessary to train the future teachers to teach music even somewhat successfully</i>
10.	<i>All of the courses contribute somewhat</i>

The course *Teaching Methods in Music* is undoubtedly the most important because it is also included in the answers provided by the three teachers who did not point out any of the courses. The second most important course is the one in which the students play instruments (and sing): *Playing Instruments* or *Music Exercises*. The teaching methods teachers believe that the “theoretical” courses are the least important: *Music* and *Music Writing*. The fact that the second most important course is practical instead of theoretical leads to the conclusion that the teaching methods teachers did not refer to the theoretical part of the course *Teaching Methods* when they chose it as the most important course, they referred to the practical part of the course. In other words, the answer to that question leads to the conclusion that the teachers consider the practical courses to be important, or more important than theoretical courses.

In the ninth question the teachers were asked to choose a music course that they believe is not necessary as part of the teacher education studies because it has no effect on the competency of their students for teaching music. One of the teachers chose the course *Music Theory*, and the other teachers did not choose any of the courses as unnecessary.

In the tenth question we asked the teaching methods teachers if they considered that the course programme of the teacher education studies offers enough courses that train the students to teach music successfully. The opinions of the teachers were divided, i.e. five teachers thought that there are enough courses and five of them thought that the number of music courses is insufficient.

The teaching methods teachers who believed that there is an insufficient number of music courses at the teacher education studies, i.e. that some changes are necessary, wrote down their thoughts on the matter in the twelfth question, and the teachers evaluated those thoughts as statements in the second stage of the survey, i.e. in the *Sample Study Questionnaire 2*.

These are their thoughts:

1. *During admissions to the faculty there should be an obligatory test of musical ability, as a general prerequisite for teaching music*
2. *The number of music classes at the studies is sufficient, but they should be redistributed to increase the number of practical classes and reduce the number of theoretical classes*
3. *Professional music teachers (who are employed at the school anyway) should assist primary education teachers during music classes*
4. *A new course in proper breathing, voice articulation during speaking and singing, and proper speaking in general should be introduced*

5. A course titled Solfeggio should be introduced, its duration would be four semesters and it would cover the content taught at elementary music schools; this would train the students in the skill of accurate intonation, basic harmonisation of children's songs, and more confident and accurate interpretation

6. A course titled Choir Singing should be introduced

7. The following courses should be introduced Music Therapy, (8) Dancing and Eurhythms, (9) Creation of Music, (10) Stage Music, (11) Basics of Conducting, (12) Musical Heritage.

### 3.2 Analysis of the Sample Study Questionnaire 2

*Sample Study Questionnaire 2* contains 12 statements listed by the teaching methods teachers in the *Sample Study Questionnaire 1*. In the *Sample Study Questionnaire 2* they were asked to express their level of agreement with the statements on a scale of 1 (*I completely disagree*) to 5 (*I completely agree*), according to the principles of the *Delphi method*.

The first statement was – *During admissions to the faculty there should be an obligatory test of musical ability, as a general prerequisite for teaching music* (Table 11).

Table 11. Testing of musical ability

Obligatory testing of musical ability, as a general prerequisite for teaching music.	Total N=8
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	8
Average mark	5.00

All eight of the teaching methods teachers we included in our sample study believe that it would be necessary to introduce testing of musical ability as part of admission exams for the teacher education studies. It should be also added that, based on the knowledge regarding the situation in the teaching practice acquired from numerous seminars and conversations with music teachers from faculties of teacher education, this opinion is probably shared by the majority of music teachers from faculties of teacher education in Croatia.

One of the teachers offered the following statement – *The number of music classes at the studies is sufficient, but they should be redistributed to increase the number of practical classes and reduce the number of theoretical classes* (Table 12).

Table 12. Redistribution of classes in music courses

The number of music classes at the studies is sufficient – redistribution of classes is necessary – increase the number of practical classes and reduce the number of theoretical classes.	Total N=8
1	1
2	0
3	0
4	1
5	6
Average mark	4.38

This statement received the average mark of 4.38, which means that the teaching methods teachers mostly agree with the statement that the number of practical classes should be increased and the number of theoretical classes should be reduced. In that case the existing number of classes at music courses could be sufficient.

The results of the evaluation of the teaching methods teachers regarding the third statement – *Professional music teachers (who are employed at the school anyway) should assist primary education teachers during music classes* – are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Teachers assisted by professional music teachers

<b>Professional music teachers should assist primary education teachers.</b>	Total
	N = 8
1	2
2	2
3	0
4	1
5	3
Average mark	3.13

It is somewhat surprising that this statement did not receive stronger support, considering that this option seems like a real and reasonable solution for the problems many of the teachers are facing, especially those with insufficient confidence regarding their own musical ability.

One of the teaching methods teachers believes that a course covering the topic of proper breathing, voice articulation during speaking and singing, and proper speaking in general should be introduced (Table 14).

Table 14. Introducing a course in proper breathing, ...

<b>Course covering the topic of proper breathing, voice articulation during speaking and singing, and proper speaking in general.</b>	Total
	N = 8
1	0
2	2
3	2
4	0
5	4
Average mark	3.75

Unlike the previous statement, the level of agreement with this statement was too high and there is no justification for it. It seems that the teaching methods teachers accepted it opportunistically, as something that cannot cause any harm, but it seems that they have forgotten that there are more important problems for teacher education studies in music than “voice articulation” and “proper breathing”, especially for students with serious issues with skills like singing and playing instruments. “Proper Speaking” is not a problem music teachers should deal with.

The teachers have evaluated the fifth statement – *A course titled Solfeggio should be introduced, its duration would be four semesters and it would cover the content taught at elementary music schools; this would train the students in the skill of accurate intonation, basic harmonisation of children’s songs, and more confident and accurate interpretation* – as shown in Table 15.

Table 15. Introducing Solfeggio

<b>Solfeggio should be introduced.</b>	Total
	N=8
1	0
2	0
3	2
4	0
5	6
Average mark	4.5

All eight teaching methods teachers agreed with this statement and it received very high marks (4.5). A course that would offer information and skills about intonation and rhythm (it would not need to be titled *Solfeggio*) would be useful and it would significantly improve general music competence of future teachers. Introducing such a course to

the syllabus should not be considered as unrealistic because with certain redistribution of course contents and a focus on practical instead of theoretical classes, this could be accomplished.

All eight of the teaching methods experts agreed with the statement that a course titled *Choir Singing* should be introduced. Choir singing as an obligation throughout the studies, or at least during most of the studies, would be incredibly useful as a chance to appreciate the act of singing, to become familiar with the choir repertoire, to acquire some elements of musical taste, and, ultimately, to receive basic skills necessary to manage a children's choir in school. It is good that the teaching methods teachers recognised the value of choir singing. All that is necessary is some effort in order to realise this good idea (Table 16).

Table 16. Introducing Choir Singing

Necessity to introduce Choir Singing.	Total
	N=8
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	8
Average mark	5

One of the teaching methods teachers believes that more music courses should be introduced, so he listed *Music Therapy*, *Dancing and Eurhythmics*, *Creation of Music*, *Stage Music*, *Basics of Conducting*, and *Musical Heritage*. Following is the display of the teachers' evaluations regarding the necessity to introduce each of the listed courses (Table 17).

Table 17. Introducing Music Therapy, Dancing and Eurhythmics, Creation of Music, Stage Music, Basics of Conducting, and Musical Heritage

It is necessary to introduce	Average mark
Music Therapy	3.13
Dancing and Eurhythmics	3.63
Creation of Music	3.63
Stage Music	3.75
Basics of Conducting	3.38
Musical Heritage	3.88

As is evident from the shown information, the teaching methods teachers agree with introducing all of the listed courses. Same as with some of the previous statements, they acted opportunistically here, without any evaluations regarding how realistic those requests would be. Introducing the courses *Music Therapy*, *Dancing and Eurhythmics*, *Creation of Music*, *Stage Music*, *Basics of Conducting*, and *Musical Heritage* would be almost unreasonable for the teacher education studies in a situation where, as we pointed out earlier, the number of classes in our existing syllabus is barely sufficient to offer basic training for teachers who must teach music.

#### 4. Conclusion

Musical competencies of primary education teachers must be determined by evaluating their efficiency in implementing the course syllabi and programmes of music courses in the first three grades of elementary school. According to the elementary school programme, teaching music in primary education should be considered as preparation for the part of elementary school when the separate course in music will be taught by a professional, i.e. dedicated teacher. This means that it would be enough for the children to sing as much as possible, as well as they can, throughout their primary education, to listen to properly selected music as much as possible, and to play games with a musical background in various ways.

Therefore, primary education teachers should primarily be trained to sing appropriately. This is a relatively simple task, because students with at least average amount of musical ability can be trained to sing in the appropriate way by simply teaching them songs appropriate for children, without any specific effort and special teaching methods that

would be a problem for the students. The appropriate way of singing by the teacher, which is the basic prerequisite for teaching their students how to sing, is almost inconceivable without playing a backing instrument - piano, synthesizer, guitar, accordion. Playing a backing instrument is actually the most significant problem during the musical education of teachers. The situation today is that even the best students play instruments "well" when compared to their less proficient peers. Their ability to play instruments can never hold up to even the lowest professional standards. This aspect of musical education can improve only if considerably more attention is devoted to playing instruments than it is now. Teachers cannot be trained to teach children how to play instruments during primary education, even if we simplify the concept of playing instruments to its bare basics. Also, primary education teachers cannot be trained to implement activities related to creating music, unless they are trivialised and reduced to the level of bad, sometimes even incoherent, games. Primary education teachers can be trained, and therefore it is necessary to train them, to listen to music. Again, this can be accomplished by just implementing the appropriate teaching methods regarding guided listening and introducing the students to as many compositions as possible, primarily those included in the course syllabus, but also those appropriate for children throughout their primary education.

Our conclusion will be that desirable and actually achievable musical competences of teachers can be summarised as follows: They should be able to sing and be confident in their knowledge of a certain number of songs, they should have sufficient skill in playing a backing instrument to be able to play along while they and the children sing, they should be able to listen to music and have knowledge of a certain number of appropriate compositions, they should be able to perform simple musical games with the children, and they should have knowledge and skills regarding the teaching methods they are implementing. It appears that it is safe to say that with the present organisation of music courses at teacher education studies, these competences cannot be acquired. The teaching methods teachers who participated in the sample study also emphasize the need for more practical training, primarily in playing instruments and singing, i.e. they believe that more classes should be devoted to music courses, and they are in favour of reorganising the course contents in order to increase the number of practical classes and reduce the number of theoretical classes. Considering that there are not enough classes as part of music courses at teacher education studies, music must be taught *from practice to theory*, or in other words, when there is not enough time, music must be taught from music and the appropriate teaching methods should be acquired simultaneously.

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